



FALCON FOCUS

Volume 9 - Number 3 - Spring 2006



PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear Floral Families,

This will be my last *Floral Focus* message to you as the principal of Floral Street School. As such, I think it very important to say "thank you" for the support you have provided to me during the past nine years that I have served as a school leader. Your investment in the Floral school community has made it a place where students are supported through volunteering, fundraising, and, most importantly, through shared values and expectations. The PTO has done a tremendous amount for our school, through providing resources and staging events that enrich the experience of children, parents, and educators. A special thank you to Kim Andrews, president; Lisa Greene, vice president; Sophia Sweeney, treasurer; and Aileen Lemoine, secretary. Their hard work made this organization run well, and you are fortunate that Lisa, Sophia, and Aileen have indicated that they will return next year.

I also must thank my fellow Floral educators for all they have done during my time here. The teachers and support staff here are remarkable people who are passionate about doing what's best for children, and I am certain that I've learned more from them than they have from me. I am particularly indebted to our "Floral Leadership Team," which consists of Patty Padilla, assistant principal; Carol Bradley, curriculum specialist; Maureen Henry, reading specialist; and Margaret Welch, curriculum/reading specialist. Their skill has enabled me to delegate leadership

Message from Todd Curtis

Dear Floral Street Families,

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. As you may know, I have had the honor of being appointed the next principal of Floral Street Elementary School. I did have a chance to meet just a few of you as part of the interview process, and hope to meet many more of you in the coming months.

I have been teaching and working with children and families since I graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine. While at college, I studied History and Education, and began working shortly after graduation with children and adolescents in a hospital setting. I earned my master's degree at Boston University before beginning work as a special educator in the Brookline Public Schools. Over the past year, I have worked as an assistant principal and acting principal in the Hopkinton Public Schools.

It is an understatement to say that I am excited to be joining the Floral Street
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FLORAL STREET SCHOOL

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PRINCIPAL:

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL:

Mrs. Patricia Padilla

We are on the Web

www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/floral

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

5/29 - MEMORIAL DAY—
No School
6/23 - Last day of school

MESSAGES

Dr. Sawyer's Message Cont'd

I could go on for pages and pages relating all the things that are wonderful about Floral Street School, but I will instead attempt to briefly capture the essence of what I believe is special about Floral. From my first day right through today, there has never been a doubt in my mind that this school community is focused on improving children's lives. I am incredibly fortunate that I have been able to work side-by-side with educators who are willing to work very, very hard in order to carry out their responsibilities in ways that will make the greatest difference for kids—academically, socially, and emotionally. The result is that our students love coming to school and learning. It is my hope that our students will carry the core values of Floral Street School—working together, demonstrating a positive attitude about learning, striving to maximize learning, and demonstrating respect—far beyond fourth grade (and I'll find out next year when I work with our 7th and 8th graders!). It is the students, above all, that I thank for making my work here meaningful. While I have made plenty of mistakes, and while I wish I could have done more, I take comfort in the fact that, together with colleagues and parents, I have had the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many children. As I move on to serving Shrewsbury in a new capacity, please know it has truly been my honor and my privilege to be the leader of this fine, fine school.

Respectfully,
Joe Sawyer

Todd Curtis's Message Cont'd

School. Although I am just getting to know the people and the community, I have already found everyone to be incredibly welcoming. I have also found a group of educators and parents who are passionate about educating the children of Floral Street School.

A truly effective school must be built upon a shared understanding of our purpose, vision and goals. As I begin my work, I will be offering opportunities for parents to share their ideas and vision of Floral Street with me, and for me to share my own values and ideas with you – I hope you can take advantage of these opportunities as they come up.

In the meantime, I hope you have a wonderful spring.

All the best,
Todd A. Curtis

NURSES' NOTES



We can hardly believe that spring is here! The nice weather is making its way. The nurse's office at Floral has gone through some recent changes this school year. Mrs. Leighton is back from maternity leave and she is working every Monday, Tuesday, and every other Wednesday. Mrs. Sorenson, who filled in as the school nurse during the leave, will stay at Floral Street and share nurse duties with Mrs. Leighton. She will work Thursday, Friday, and every other Wednesday.

We have seen some recent cases of chickenpox and shingles in the school. All cases are breakthroughs in children who have been vaccinated against the disease. Local pediatricians are stating that the vaccine is not foolproof and that if your child comes down with the disease most cases are not

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READING SPECIALIST'S NOTE

The Reading War by Maureen Henry, Reading Specialist

“Help! My child hates to read. I beg, plead and even bribe in order to get him (or her) to read. What should I do?”

If this sounds familiar, then your child is probably a reluctant reader. With the summer months approaching this battle quite possibly will turn into an outright war! Here are some questions to ask yourself if you are trying to increase the amount of time your child is reading.

Is my child reading books that are *easy* for him or her?

Your child's independent reading should be easy! We want our children to experience a high level of success when they are reading. Successful reading motivates children to read more often and for enjoyment, which leads to a life-long love of reading. A book will probably be easy for your child if he or she can recognize the majority of the words quickly and easily and if he or she has familiarity with the topic.

Am I a good reading role model for my child?

It is important to model good reading habits for your child every day. Make sure that your child sees you reading a book, a magazine or the newspaper. Talk to your child about what you are reading and ask your child about what they are reading. Conversation is an important component of comprehension. Just remember it should be a casual, comfortable conversation. It might be helpful to set a family DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time. This will help your child to see that reading is important to the entire family.

Do I know what books would interest my child?

Find books that your child wants to read. What is your child interested in? Is baseball your child's game or maybe it is dancing or horseback riding? Think about your child's topic of interest and try to find as many books on that topic as possible. There are many resources to help you such as booklists available online at Amazon and Borders or the public library.

Do I make time to read aloud to my child even if he or she can read independently?

It is important to read aloud to your child regardless of his or her reading level. When you read aloud, you are modeling the joy of reading. Additionally, you are introducing your child to new ideas and vocabulary words.

I hope these ideas will help make reading time stress free. Wishing you a happy, healthy literacy-filled summer!

Maureen Henry



ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

As this Year Draws to a Close: An Update

Dear Floral Families,

The month of May has quickly arrived, which means all the exciting end-of-the-year events begin. With the final component of the grades 3 and 4 MCAS exams completed, the students will shift their focus to preparation for the Poetry Celebration, which will take place in June this year. The students are eagerly anticipating this featured yearly event.

The placement process has been finalized for the 2006-2007 school year, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the wonderful emails and notes that you sent my way. These informational tools, along with the input of the classroom teachers, were extremely useful as I carefully completed the students' placements. I am confident that your children will continue to grow and flourish at Floral, due in great part to the tireless efforts and commitment of the educators that are genuinely dedicated to your child's learning. I am extremely proud and fortunate to work with such an exceptional group of consummate professionals.

Floral Street's School Council has had a very productive year, culminating with the presentation of the School Improvement Plan to the School Committee last month. For those of you that are not familiar advises the principal on matters with the role of the council, this group of individuals discuss issues of concern to the Floral community, related to the policies, procedures, and improvement of the school, and participates in the development and monitoring of the School Improvement Plan. At their final meeting of the year, the committee worked in sub-groups to focus on specific areas of interest. One group brainstormed ways to recruit and further involve parents/volunteers in the school. Another group reviewed a rough draft of a booklet created to assist new Floral families become familiar with our school. The final group discussed ways in which teachers could best utilize the technology resources that will no longer be provided by the technology specialist. With the many budget cuts that have occurred this year, it is imperative, that we as members of the Floral community, work together and think of creative ways to become increasingly involved in the educational experiences of our children.

As my second year at Floral Street School comes to a close, I want to thank all of you for allowing me to be a part and share in so many of your child's school memories. The numerous events that have taken place over the past two years have been wonderful learning experiences for me and have provided me with many fond memories as well. You all should be proud of your children. I know I am.

Have a super summer!

Patricia Padilla

Nurses' Note continued from Page 2



as severe as they would normally expect.

The child who has the confirmed disease must be out of school for approximately 7-10 days and with ALL lesions crusted over and dried. Shingles usually occurs in individuals who have already had chickenpox as a child. The disease is contagious if another child touches the area that is affected. As long as the area is covered appropriately, the child is able to return to school. However, if the area affected is one that cannot be covered with clothing, the child may not return to school until the area is dry and crusted.

Allergy season is here. If your child usually suffers from seasonal allergies, please send in some medicine to leave in the nurse's office. You can obtain an order sheet from the Shrewsbury website or call the office so that we may send one home in your child's folder. We would be happy to administer the medicine in the office if needed.

With the warm weather, the children are outside more often than in the colder months. Please send your children with sun block in their bags in the event that they may need it. We do not supply this to the children in the nurse's office. We would be happy to assist the child applying it if needed.

As a reminder, we will be requiring updated physical exams from any child who has not had a physical since 2003. All children who have not sent updated copies to the nurse will be excluded from school and not able to return without providing an updated form. Please begin scheduling their exams as soon as possible. There will be no exceptions made for any child who does not submit the proper information to the school nurse. You will be notified in your child's folder if they need updated physical information. If you are not notified, your child is up to date to start the fall school year.

We are looking for any parents that are interested in volunteering some time in the fall to assist in vision and hearing screenings. Please call the nurse's office to leave your name and we will be contacting you in the fall to set up some times to screen the students. A full training will be given to each volunteer prior to the screening day.

As always, please contact the nurse's office at any time for questions or concerns. Have a wonderful spring!!

LITERACY

GAPS LEAD TO CREATIVE THINKING

Faced with numerous budget cutbacks, Floral Street School Council members and staff members are putting their heads together to create a plan that would alleviate a small portion of the loss in support staff. In order to meet the constraints of the budget, next year there will be major job cuts including technology and media specialists, reading and Title 1 specialists, curriculum specialists and classroom aides. A small number of modified positions have been created to mitigate some of the effect, but these losses mean there will now be an even wider gap between what we provided for students just a few years ago and what we will be able to support next year.

As a result, the school is turning even more toward volunteers to help in classrooms, supervise lunch duties, fill in occasionally as secretarial substitutes, and prepare and monitor technology and media related lessons.

At a recent School Council meeting, members created a list of suggestions in each of the areas of concern. Among them was attracting volunteers to work in the classrooms. Council members, consisting of parents and teachers, and school administrators, suggested training for parent volunteers in the areas of literature, mathematics and writing. In addition, volunteers could be used to set up technology equipment, prepare website based instruction, monitor the borrowing and returning of technology material, and supervise the utilization of the media center on a regular basis. The Council recommended seeking the support of outside resources such as the Senior Center and Shrewsbury High School students.

During a subsequent staff meeting, teachers suggested additional ways to increase volunteer support and utilize media and technology in the classroom. Among those suggestions was the development of a parent survey that would provide an opportunity for parents to indicate particular strengths, interests and job preferences. The survey would go home before the end of the school year.

Staff members also had several suggestions for filling the spaces left vacant by media and technology specialists. For example, volunteers could be utilized in the classroom to support teachers who are working on technology-based lessons or research particular websites at home. There was also interest in assigning a parent media aide for each classroom or a daily volunteer in the Media Center. All of these positions would require some level of training for volunteers prior to beginning their assignments.



Floral Street hopes to have a list of trained parents and other volunteers on board by the close of the school year so that by early September, it will be the business of education as much as possible for students, teachers, and families. It is important to note, however, that volunteerism cannot replace the support that is now provided by highly trained, professional educators who work full time to serve our students. It is our hope that these “stop gap” measures will help maintain some of the quality experiences that currently benefit our students.

~ Carol Bradley, Curriculum Specialist

READING/CURRICULUM

Summer Reading Bridges the Gap

"Why do children have to read during the summer? Isn't it supposed to be vacation time?"

Responses to last year's parent survey on summer reading were overwhelmingly positive. However, there were enough replies with the above question to make it worth some further exploration. When we read the phrase "have to read" it sounds like reading is seen as a burdensome activity – like taking out the trash or raking leaves, one which children resist and parents impose. As teachers and reading specialists our goal is to encourage a love of reading so that students can't wait to get to the next book, chapter or page. How can we help students of all reading abilities to develop this motivation?

Talk it up! Make sure that every time you talk about books, reading in general and summer reading you sound excited and enthusiastic. *"I can't wait to see the summer reading books – I wonder which titles you'll choose?"* Involve your son or daughter in the process. Choice is a key component of motivation. Allowing your child to choose their own books will give them some ownership and sense of control. Try to avoid pushing them to read books that are too hard or too long for them – or those that reflect *your* tastes and interests rather than theirs. Teachers have worked hard this year to show students how to select a just-right book. The students know themselves as readers and should have the opportunity to practice this skill throughout the summer.

When will the lists come home? Floral Street School is partnering with Barnes & Noble Bookstores to allow parents to purchase books through an order form (with no sales tax, since it is through the schools). The lists should be sent home around the time of this newsletter. They also are or will be available as follows:

1. On our website : <http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/floral/index.asp>
2. At the library
3. At the customer service desks of local bookstores

In addition, some copies of the list will be available in the school office.

The recommendation is that each student should read *at least* one of the required reads and *at least* two books from the other selections – a total of three books. However, please note the italics, three books in nine weeks is a minimum expectation. If reading is scheduled as a regular part of every vacation day, your child should be able to read and enjoy many, many titles.

There is no doubt – from both research and experience that students who don't read and write daily during the summer lose skills and knowledge over the vacation:

Nearly every child suffers from what is called *summer learning loss*. Children forget important skills and knowledge that they don't use over the summer. For example, students who take a holiday from reading during the summer score lower on tests at the end of their vacation than they did on the same reading tests at the beginning of the summer. In total, many students lose one to two months' worth of reading and math performance during the summer. Teachers often spend four to eight weeks at the beginning of each school year re-teaching material that students have forgotten over the summer.

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Summer Reading Bridges the Gap

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From: *Making the Most of Summer Vacation for Elementary School Children* by Matthew Boulay, Teachers College and Ronald Fairchild, Teach Baltimore

For the complete article which includes some excellent tips for parents follow the link below:

http://www.jhu.edu/teachbaltimore/resources/docs/ERIC_summer_learning_loss.doc

The key to success is to make learning connect in a fun way to regular vacation activities. Give your child a stack of photographs and a composition notebook and they can create a book starring their favorite character – themselves! Having them complete store-bought activity workbooks is likely to reinforce the false idea that schoolwork is dull and repetitive. Have them take responsibility for reading to younger siblings, writing shopping lists, packing lists, and planning schedules and you will show them how important reading and writing are in the real world.

Finally, make sure your children see you reading and writing. Choose a title from the summer reading lists and discuss it with your child – compare notes on your reading choice. If the reading team had to choose just one book to recommend to parents it would be:

7 Keys to Comprehension: How to Help Your Kids Read It and Get It! Susan Zimmermann and Chryse Hutchins. Enjoy!

Here is a listing of the *required* reads for students currently in grades K – 3. The reading list for Sherwood Middle School will be available very soon.

Entering Grade 1

I Like Me by Nancy Carlson
Leo the Late Bloomer by Robert Kraus
Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Entering Grade 2

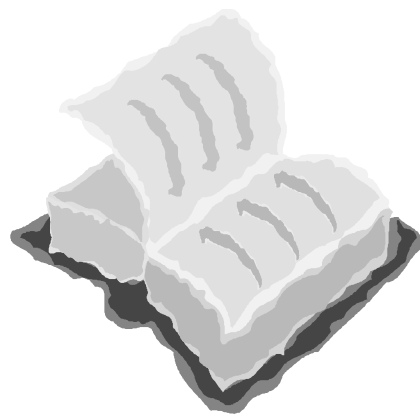
Henry and Mudge: the First Book by Cynthia Rylant
Frog and Toad are Friends by Arnold Lobel
The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

Entering Grade 3

Young Cam Jansen and the Missing Cookie by David Adler
A-Z Mysteries: Absent Author by Ron Roy
Boxcar Children, #1 by Gertrude Chandler Warner

Entering Grade 4

Freckle Juice by Judy Blume
Frindle by Andrew Clement
Island: Shipwreck by Gordan Korman



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MESSAGE FROM THE PTO PRESIDENT

Dear Floral Parents, Teachers and Staff,

This year seems to have gone by so quickly. We are now planning for the 4th Grade Celebration, and I feel it's a celebration for me as well, as I will be moving on from Floral to the Middle Schools for the next 4 years.

It has been a pleasure serving you for the last 6 years in multiple roles, Classroom Volunteer, Cafeteria Volunteer, Committee Volunteer, Fundraising Chairperson Coordinator for 3 years, and as your PTO President for this last year. I have been impressed by Floral Street Parents and its Teachers and Staff by how much they care, how much they give, how quickly and easily they are to help out when needed.

We were concerned earlier in the year that we might not make our goal of \$30,000 to help fund all the wonderful extra curricular activities that Floral and its students have become accustomed to. I am very glad to say that we all pulled together, worked hard, and met our goal!!!! What a great feeling to be able to accomplish this.

As we all end the year and look forward to summer, please begin thinking about how you want Floral to be next year. With new leadership from a new Principal, new families coming in, and less teachers available, it will be even more urgent that we all work together to keep Floral the school it has grown to be. We have some wonderful candidates applying for the roles of your PTO Executive Board, please come to see them and vote for them on May 30th. (Also, if you are interested in any of these roles, there's still time to apply.) There are some fabulous ideas being discussed, and they will need your help to implement them. Please take part in your PTO – you can make a difference!

I wanted to personally thank the members of this year's PTO Executive Board, Lisa Greene, Sophia Sweeney, Aileene Lemoine, Mary Hastings and all the Chairpersons of the different events for a job well done. With budget concerns and lack of help at certain times, they have been troopers and muddled through with confidence, stamina and love for this school. You have all been a pleasure to work with, and I will look forward to working with you again in the future!

To Dr. Joe Sawyer and his Teacher and Administration Staff, I can't thank you enough for all the hard work and dedication you give and give and give each and every day to our kids. You truly are the backbone of the school, and you make it what it is and our children are better for it!

I will miss being a part of Floral and the people who will still gather at its doors; but I look forward to a new school system, working with Dr. Sawyer once again, and waiting for friends to join me! Good Luck next year and have a GREAT Summer!

Warmest Regards,

Kimberly Andrews,
PTO President

Any articles to be submitted for the newsletter please send them to the newsletter editor; Jayna Mistry at jayna_mistry@yahoo.com